

Salinity Protocol



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Purpose

To measure the salinity of the water sample using the hydrometer method.

Overview

The salt content (salinity) of a water body is one of the main factors determining what organisms will be found there. The density of water is related to the amount of salt dissolved in it. A hydrometer is used to measure density. The salinity of the water is determined from the density and water temperature.

Level

All

Time

Actual measurement time is 10 minutes.

Frequency

Weekly

Key Concepts

- High and low tides
- Method of measuring salinity by density
- Specific gravity
- Salinity in water
- Standardization
- Accuracy
- Precision

Skills

- Using a hydrometer and thermometer
- Reading conversion tables
- Designing measurement strategies
- Recording data
- Interpreting results.

Materials and Tools

- Hydrometer
- Conversion table
- 500 mL clear plastic graduated cylinder
- Alcohol-filled thermometer
- Table salt (NaCl)
- Distilled water
- Balance
- 2 1-liter plastic bottles
- Masking tape

Preparation

Complete the *Calibration* activities below. Bring the tools and materials to the water site.

Prerequisites

A brief discussion of salinity and its relation to density

Practice by doing calibration

Note: This measurement is for salt and brackish waters only. For fresh waters measure conductivity instead.

Background

The sea is salty; it has a much higher dissolved solids content than do fresh waters. Salinity is a measure of that saltiness and is expressed in parts impurity per thousand parts water. The average salinity of the Earth's oceans is 35 parts per thousand, usually written as 35 ‰. Sodium and chloride, the components of common table salt (NaCl), contribute the most to the salinity. Since the proportion of chloride in sea water changes little from place to place we can also measure the chloride content, referred to as chlorinity, to

estimate the total salinity. In bays and estuaries we can find a wide range of salinity values, since these are the regions where freshwater and sea water mix. The salinity of these *brackish* waters is between that of freshwater, which averages 0.5 ‰, and sea water.

Every continent on Earth also has inland lakes that are saline. Some of the more prominent examples are the Caspian Sea in Central Asia, the Great Salt Lake in North America, and several lakes in the Great Rift Valley of East Africa. Some



of these are even more saline than sea water. Waters acquire salinity because rivers carry salts that originated from the weathering, or dissolving, of continental rocks. When water evaporates the salts stay behind, resulting in a buildup of dissolved material. At some point the water becomes *saturated* with solids, they precipitate out as solids, and settle out of the water. Whereas the ocean's salinity changes slowly, over many millennia, the salinity of inland waters can change more quickly when rainfall or snowmelt patterns change.

The salt content of a water body is one of the main factors determining what organisms will be found there. Thus fresh waters and saline waters are inhabited by quite different organisms. Plants and animals that live in or use freshwater generally have a salt content inside their cells that is greater than the water they inhabit or use. They tend to give off salts as waste products. Saltwater plants and animals have a salt content equal to or less than the salinity of the surrounding water, and thus have different mechanisms for maintaining their salt balance. In brackish waters we find plants and animals that can tolerate changes in salinity.

Special Considerations for Brackish and Salt Water Sites

For the salinity protocols, you will need to know the times of high and low tide at a location as close as possible to your Hydrology Study Site. You will need to obtain the latitude and longitude of this location. If you can reach this location, the latitude and longitude can be measured using a GPS receiver and following the GPS protocol. You should be able to obtain latitude and longitude from those who provide the high and low tide information.

Calibration and Quality Control

Standards should be run at least twice each year to verify your technique. Fresh standards should be prepared annually.

Salinity Standards

Salinity standards do not come with the Hydrometer, and need to be prepared as follows:

1. Add water to table salt to make a 35 ppt salinity standard. Use this salinity standard and a blank to test the accuracy of the hydrometer.

35 ppt standard:

1.1 Measure out 17.5 g NaCl (table salt) using an analytical balance. Pour this into a 500 mL graduated cylinder.

1.2 Fill the cylinder to the 500 mL line with distilled water.

1.3 Carefully swirl the solution until all the salt has dissolved.

1.4 Pour the solution into a 1-liter plastic bottle and label with masking tape (include the date).

Blank:

1.5 Measure out 500 mL of distilled water into a 1-liter plastic bottle and label with masking tape.

2. Perform the Protocol to measure the salinity of the standard and the blank. Where it says "sample water" use the standard or the blank.
3. Record the values measured for these standards on the Calibration Data Work Sheet.
4. If the blank gives a non-zero reading, rinse your glassware and graduated cylinder at least 3 times, and repeat the measurement. If still not zero, get a new source of distilled water.
5. If salinity standard is off by more than 2 ppt, prepare a new standard and repeat the measurement.

Times of High and Low Tide

Obtain the times of high and low tide for the location nearest your site for which these are available. The times reported should be for the high or low tide immediately preceding and following the time you make your measurements. Record these times and the place where they occur on your Hydrology Investigation Data Work Sheet and report them with your other data to the GLOBE Student Data Server.

How to Measure Salinity

Note: Before using the thermometer in this protocol, test it for accuracy following the instructions in Maximum, Minimum, and Current Temperature Protocol of the Atmosphere Investigation.

1. Rinse the 500 mL clear plastic graduated cylinder at least twice with sample water.
2. Fill the cylinder with sample water until the water level is 2 to 3 cm from the top of the cylinder.
3. Determine the temperature of your sample following the Water Temperature Protocol and record this value on the Hydrology Investigation Data Work Sheet.
4. Place the hydrometer in the cylinder and allow it to settle. Follow the manufacturer's instructions that came with the hydrometer. The hydrometer should not touch the cylinder walls, and be sure to take the reading from the bottom of the meniscus. Read the specific gravity from the hydrometer scale. Reading to three decimal places is acceptable. Older students can practice reading to four decimal places and interpolating between the values given in Table HYD-P-2. Record this value on the Hydrology Investigation Data Work Sheet.
5. Using the temperature and specific gravity values, read the salinity of the sample from Table HYD-P-2. To find the salinity value for your water sample:
 - 5.1. Look up the temperature and specific gravity of the sample in Table HYD-P-2.
 - 5.2. Look at the corresponding salinity

(ppt) and record it on the Hydrology Investigation Data Work Sheet. For example, a water sample temperature of 22 C and specific gravity of 1.0070 has a salinity of 10.6 ppt.

6. Repeat steps 2 - 5 for at least two additional samples. Different student groups can make these additional measurements.
7. Take the average of the salinity values measured for the different samples. If the recorded values are all within 2 ppt of the average, proceed to step 8. If they are not within 2 ppt of the average, students should repeat the measurement using new samples, then record and average the new values. If there is still one outlier (a value far different from the rest) discard that value, average the remaining values, and if they are now within 2 ppt of this new average, proceed to step 8. If there is still a wide spread in values, discuss the procedures with the students and repeat the measurement if possible.
8. Submit to the GLOBE Student Data Server the temperature, specific gravity, and salinity from the student(s) whose salinity is closest to the average. If only two measurements were used to calculate the average, report the temperature, specific gravity, and salinity from either group.

*Table HYD-P-2: Salinity (parts per thousand) as a function of density and temperature**

Temperature of Water in Graduated Cylinder (C)

Observed Reading	-2.0	-1.0	0.0	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	13.0	14.0
0.9980																	
0.9990																	
1.0000																	
1.0010	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8
1.0020	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.3
1.0030	3.3	3.2	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.6
1.0040	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.9
1.0050	5.8	5.7	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.2
1.0060	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.7	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.7	6.7	6.8	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.5
1.0070	8.1	8.1	8.0	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.1	8.1	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.8
1.0080	9.4	9.3	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.3	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.7	9.8	10.0
1.0090	10.6	10.5	10.5	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.4	10.5	10.5	10.6	10.6	10.7	10.9	11.0	11.1	11.3
1.0100	11.9	11.8	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	11.8	11.8	11.9	12.0	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.6
1.0110	13.1	13.0	13.0	12.8	12.8	12.8	12.8	13.0	13.0	13.1	13.1	13.2	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.7	13.9
1.0120	14.3	14.3	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.1	14.3	14.3	14.4	14.5	14.7	14.8	14.9	15.0	15.2
1.0130	15.6	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.4	15.6	15.7	15.8	15.8	16.0	16.2	16.3	16.5
1.0140	16.7	16.7	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.7	16.7	16.9	17.0	17.0	17.1	17.3	17.5	17.7	17.8
1.0150	18.0	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.9	18.0	18.0	18.2	18.3	18.4	18.6	18.8	19.0	19.1
1.0160	19.2	19.2	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.1	19.2	19.2	19.3	19.3	19.5	19.6	19.7	19.9	20.1	20.3	20.4
1.0170	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.4	20.5	20.5	20.6	20.8	20.9	21.0	21.2	21.3	21.6	21.7
1.0180	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.6	21.6	21.7	21.7	21.7	21.8	22.0	22.1	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.6	22.9	23.0
1.0190	22.9	22.9	22.9	22.9	22.9	22.9	23.0	23.0	23.1	23.3	23.4	23.5	23.6	23.8	23.9	24.2	24.3
1.0200	24.2	24.2	24.2	24.0	24.2	24.2	24.2	24.3	24.3	24.4	24.6	24.7	24.8	25.1	25.2	25.5	25.6
1.0210	25.3	25.3	25.3	25.3	25.3	25.5	25.5	25.6	25.6	25.7	25.9	26.0	26.1	26.4	26.5	26.8	26.9
1.0220	26.6	26.6	26.6	26.6	26.6	26.6	26.8	26.8	26.9	27.0	27.2	27.3	27.4	27.7	27.8	28.1	28.2
1.0230	27.8	27.8	27.8	27.8	27.8	27.9	27.9	28.1	28.2	28.3	28.5	28.6	28.7	28.9	29.1	29.4	29.5
1.0240	29.1	29.1	29.1	29.1	29.1	29.1	29.2	29.4	29.5	29.5	29.8	29.9	30.0	30.2	30.4	30.6	30.8
1.0250	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.3	30.4	30.4	30.6	30.6	30.7	30.8	30.9	31.1	31.3	31.5	31.7	31.9	32.1
1.0260	31.6	31.6	31.6	31.6	31.6	31.7	31.7	31.9	32.0	32.1	32.2	32.4	32.6	32.8	33.0	33.2	33.4
1.0270	32.8	32.8	32.8	32.9	32.9	32.9	33.0	33.2	33.3	33.4	33.5	33.7	33.9	34.1	34.3	34.5	34.7
1.0280	33.9	34.1	34.1	34.1	34.1	34.2	34.3	34.5	34.5	34.7	34.8	35.0	35.1	35.4	35.6	35.8	36.0
1.0290	35.2	35.2	35.2	35.4	35.4	35.5	35.5	35.6	35.8	35.9	36.2	36.3	36.4	36.7	36.8	37.1	37.3
1.0300	36.4	36.5	36.5	36.5	36.7	36.7	36.8	36.9	37.1	37.2	37.3	37.6	37.7	38.0	38.1	38.4	38.6
1.0310	37.7	37.7	37.7	37.8	37.8	38.0	38.1	38.2	38.4	38.5	38.6	38.9	39.0	39.3	39.4	39.7	39.9

* Adapted from LaMotte hydrometer instructions.

Table HYD-P-2: Salinity (parts per thousand) as a function of density and temperature - continued

Temperature of Water in Graduated Cylinder (C)

Observed Reading	15.0	16.0	17.0	18.0	18.5	19.0	19.5	20.0	20.5	21.0	21.5	22.0	22.5	23.0	23.5	24.0	24.5
0.9980																	
0.9990										0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.7	
1.0000		0.0	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0
1.0010	1.0	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2
1.0020	2.4	2.5	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.6	4.8
1.0030	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.8	5.9	6.1
1.0040	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.7	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.4
1.0050	6.3	6.6	6.7	7.0	7.1	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.7	7.9	8.1	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.7
1.0060	7.6	7.9	8.0	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.7	8.8	8.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.4	9.6	9.7	9.8	10.1
1.0070	8.9	9.2	9.3	9.6	9.7	9.8	10.0	10.1	10.2	10.4	10.5	10.6	10.7	10.9	11.0	11.3	11.4
1.0080	10.2	10.5	10.6	10.9	11.0	11.1	11.3	11.4	11.5	11.7	11.8	11.9	12.0	12.2	12.4	12.6	12.7
1.0090	11.5	11.8	11.9	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.6	12.7	12.8	13.0	13.1	13.2	13.4	13.6	13.7	13.9	14.0
1.0100	12.8	13.1	13.2	13.5	13.6	13.7	13.9	14.0	14.1	14.3	14.4	14.5	14.8	14.9	15.0	15.2	15.3
1.0110	14.1	14.4	14.5	14.8	14.9	15.0	15.2	15.3	15.4	15.6	15.7	16.0	16.1	16.2	16.3	16.5	16.7
1.0120	15.4	15.7	15.8	16.1	16.2	16.3	16.5	16.6	16.7	17.0	17.1	17.3	17.4	17.5	17.7	17.9	18.0
1.0130	16.7	17.0	17.1	17.4	17.5	17.7	17.8	17.9	18.0	18.3	18.4	18.6	18.7	18.8	19.1	19.2	19.3
1.0140	18.0	18.3	18.6	18.7	18.8	19.0	19.1	19.3	19.5	19.6	19.7	19.9	20.0	20.1	20.4	20.5	20.6
1.0150	19.3	19.6	19.9	20.0	20.1	20.4	20.5	20.6	20.8	20.9	21.0	21.2	21.3	21.6	21.7	21.8	22.0
1.0160	20.6	20.9	21.2	21.3	21.4	21.7	21.8	22.0	22.1	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.7	22.9	23.0	23.3	23.4
1.0170	22.0	22.2	22.5	22.7	22.9	23.0	23.1	23.3	23.4	23.5	23.6	23.8	24.0	24.2	24.3	24.6	24.7
1.0180	23.3	23.5	23.8	24.0	24.2	24.3	24.4	24.6	24.7	24.8	24.9	25.2	25.3	25.5	25.6	25.9	26.0
1.0190	24.6	24.8	25.1	25.3	25.5	25.6	25.7	25.9	26.0	26.1	26.4	26.5	26.6	26.8	27.0	27.2	27.3
1.0200	25.9	26.1	26.4	26.6	26.8	26.9	27.0	27.2	27.3	27.4	27.7	27.8	27.9	28.2	28.3	28.5	28.6
1.0210	27.2	27.4	27.7	27.9	28.1	28.2	28.3	28.5	28.6	28.9	29.0	29.1	29.2	29.5	29.6	29.8	30.0
1.0220	28.5	28.7	29.0	29.2	29.4	29.5	29.6	29.8	30.0	30.2	30.3	30.4	30.7	30.8	30.9	31.2	31.3
1.0230	29.8	30.0	30.3	30.6	30.7	30.8	30.9	31.2	31.3	31.5	31.6	31.7	32.0	32.1	32.2	32.5	32.6
1.0240	31.1	31.3	31.6	31.9	32.0	32.1	32.2	32.5	32.6	32.8	32.9	33.2	33.3	33.4	33.7	33.8	33.9
1.0250	32.4	32.6	32.9	33.2	33.3	33.4	33.7	33.8	33.9	34.1	34.2	34.5	34.6	34.7	35.0	35.1	35.2
1.0260	33.7	33.9	34.2	34.5	34.6	34.7	35.0	35.1	35.2	35.4	35.6	35.8	35.9	36.0	36.3	36.4	36.7
1.0270	35.0	35.2	35.5	35.8	35.9	36.2	36.3	36.4	36.5	36.7	36.9	37.1	37.2	37.5	37.6	37.8	38.0
1.0280	36.3	36.5	36.8	37.1	37.2	37.5	37.6	37.7	37.8	38.1	38.2	38.4	38.5	38.8	38.9	39.1	39.3
1.0290	37.6	37.8	38.1	38.4	38.6	38.8	38.9	39.0	39.1	39.4	39.5	39.7	39.9	40.1	40.2	40.5	40.6
1.0300	38.9	39.1	39.4	39.7	39.9	40.1	40.2	40.3	40.6	40.7	40.8	41.0	41.2	41.4	41.6	41.8	41.9
1.0310	40.2	40.5	40.7	41.0	41.2	41.4	41.5	41.8	41.9	42.0	42.1	42.3	42.5				

Table HYD-P-2: Salinity (parts per thousand) as a function of density and temperature - continued

Temperature of Water in Graduated Cylinder (C)

Observed Reading	25.0	25.5	26.0	26.5	27.0	27.5	28.0	28.5	29.0	29.5	30.0	30.5	31.0	31.5	32.0	32.5	33.0
0.9980			0.1	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.5	1.6	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.4	
0.9990	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.8	2.9	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.8
1.0000	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.7	4.0	4.1	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1
1.0010	3.4	3.6	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.8	4.9	5.1	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.8	5.9	6.2	6.4
1.0020	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.8	7.0	7.2	7.5	7.6	7.9
1.0030	6.2	6.3	6.6	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.7	8.0	8.1	8.4	8.5	8.8	9.1	9.2
1.0040	7.5	7.7	7.9	8.0	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.8	8.9	9.2	9.3	9.6	9.7	10.0	10.1	10.4	10.5
1.0050	8.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.6	9.7	10.0	10.1	10.2	10.5	10.6	10.9	11.0	11.3	11.5	11.7	11.9
1.0060	10.2	10.4	10.5	10.7	10.9	11.0	11.3	11.4	11.7	11.8	12.0	12.2	12.4	12.6	12.8	13.1	13.2
1.0070	11.5	11.7	11.9	12.0	12.2	12.4	12.6	12.8	13.0	13.1	13.4	13.6	13.7	14.0	14.1	14.4	14.7
1.0080	12.8	13.0	13.2	13.4	13.6	13.7	13.9	14.1	14.3	14.5	14.7	14.9	15.2	15.3	15.6	15.7	16.0
1.0090	14.1	14.4	14.5	14.7	14.9	15.0	15.3	15.4	15.7	15.8	16.1	16.2	16.5	16.6	16.9	17.1	17.3
1.0100	15.6	15.7	15.8	16.1	16.2	16.5	16.6	16.7	17.0	17.1	17.4	17.5	17.8	18.0	18.2	18.4	18.7
1.0110	16.9	17.0	17.3	17.4	17.5	17.8	17.9	18.2	18.3	18.6	18.7	19.0	19.1	19.3	19.6	19.7	20.0
1.0120	18.2	18.3	18.6	18.7	19.0	19.1	19.3	19.5	19.6	19.9	20.1	20.3	20.5	20.6	20.9	21.2	21.3
1.0130	19.5	19.7	19.9	20.0	20.3	20.4	20.6	20.8	21.0	21.2	21.4	21.6	21.8	22.1	22.2	22.5	22.7
1.0140	20.9	21.0	21.2	21.4	21.6	21.8	22.0	22.2	22.3	22.6	22.7	23.0	23.1	23.4	23.6	23.8	24.0
1.0150	22.2	22.3	22.5	22.7	22.9	23.1	23.3	23.5	23.6	23.9	24.0	24.3	24.6	24.7	24.9	25.2	25.3
1.0160	23.5	23.6	23.9	24.0	24.3	24.4	24.7	24.8	25.1	25.2	25.5	25.6	25.9	26.1	26.3	26.5	26.8
1.0170	24.8	25.1	25.2	25.3	25.6	25.7	26.0	26.1	26.4	26.5	26.8	27.0	27.2	27.4	27.7	27.8	28.1
1.0180	26.1	26.4	26.5	26.8	26.9	27.2	27.3	27.6	27.7	27.9	28.1	28.3	28.5	28.7	29.0	29.2	29.4
1.0190	27.6	27.7	27.8	28.1	28.2	28.5	28.6	28.9	29.0	29.2	29.5	29.6	29.9	30.0	30.3	30.6	30.8
1.0200	28.9	29.0	29.2	29.4	29.6	29.8	30.0	30.2	30.4	30.6	30.8	30.9	31.2	31.5	31.6	31.9	32.1
1.0210	30.2	30.3	30.6	30.7	30.9	31.1	31.3	31.5	31.7	32.0	32.1	32.4	32.5	32.8	33.0	33.3	33.4
1.0220	31.5	31.7	31.9	32.0	32.2	32.5	32.6	32.9	33.0	33.3	33.4	33.7	33.9	34.1	34.3	34.6	34.8
1.0230	32.8	33.0	33.2	33.4	33.5	33.8	33.9	34.2	34.5	34.6	34.8	35.0	35.2	35.5	35.6	35.9	36.2
1.0240	34.2	34.3	34.5	34.7	35.0	35.1	35.4	35.5	35.8	35.9	36.2	36.4	36.5	36.8	37.1	37.2	37.5
1.0250	35.5	35.6	35.9	36.0	36.3	36.4	36.7	36.8	37.1	37.2	37.5	37.7	37.8	38.1	38.4	38.6	38.8
1.0260	36.8	36.9	37.2	37.3	37.6	37.7	38.0	38.2	38.4	38.6	38.8	39.0	39.3	39.4	39.7	39.9	40.2
1.0270	38.1	38.4	38.5	38.8	38.9	39.1	39.3	39.5	39.8	39.9	40.2	40.3	40.6	40.8	41.0	41.2	41.5
1.0280	39.4	39.7	39.8	40.1	40.2	40.5	40.7	40.8	41.1	41.2	41.5						
1.0290	40.8	41.0	41.2	41.4	41.6	41.8											